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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BEIRUT 000470

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/FO, NEA/ELA
ALSO FOR IO ACTING A/S WARLICK
P FOR DRUSSELL
USUN FOR WOLFF/GERMAIN/SCHEDLBAUER
NSC FOR SHAPIRO, MCDERMOTT
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DRL/NESA FOR WHITMAN, BARGHOUT

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [LE](#)

SUBJECT: LEBANON: HARIRI DESCRIBES HIMSELF AS "MISTER FIX IT"

REF: A. BEIRUT 466
[B](#). BEIRUT 463
[C](#). BEIRUT 445
[D](#). BEIRUT 401

Classified By: Ambassador Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) March 14 Sunni leader Saad Hariri told the Ambassador and DCM April 23 that although relations within the March 14 leadership currently were not at their best, Hariri and his allies would find a solution. Referring to himself as "Mister Fix-it," Hariri said disgruntlement with Druze leader Walid Jumblatt over statements leaked to the press would be resolved in within days. Hariri said he would then mediate between his Christian allies, Lebanese Forces' (LF) Samir Geagea and Kataeb's Amine Gemayel, who still disagree over electoral seat allocation. Hariri was pleased about the recent announcement of March 14 lists in West Bekaa, Tripoli, Minnieh-Dinnieh, and Akkar. Overall, he was positive about March 14's chances in the June 7 elections, although he believed the Zahle and Beirut 1 lists still needed work. In a separate meeting, March 14 MP Nayla Mouawad gave the DCM her thoughts on March 14's position as the election approaches. End summary.

SOLVING JUMBLATT...

[1](#)2. (C) An energetic and upbeat Saad Hariri, accompanied by his cousin and political right-hand man Nader Hariri, condemned Druze leader Walid Jumblatt's recent statements (Ref A), but also provided context to the remarks and expressed optimism about resolving the situation. Meeting with the Ambassador and DCM on April 23, Hariri said the information leaked from Jumblatt's meeting had been taken from Jumblatt's speech to a gathering of "fundamentalist" Druze at the home of a "fundamentalist Druze sheikh." The statements were only part of a much longer talk; the media selected text that would have the most impact, said Saad. Jumblatt's position defending the Christians for the last eight years should not be thrown away because of one statement, said Hariri. He added that he had met with some

of Jumblatt's advisors earlier that day, and a meeting and photo op with Jumblatt were scheduled for April 27.

13. (C) The alarming thing about the incident, said Hariri, was that the leaked information came from two separate private meetings Jumblatt had held, one in Lebanon and one in Turkey. The security breach was a message from the opposition that Jumblatt was being watched, he posited. According to Hariri, the media clip from Turkey had been traced to someone close to Hizballah, and the source of the leak from the meeting of Druze religious leaders was a Druze sheikh close to Druze opposition leader Talal Arslan and paid by Hizballah.

...AND THEN THE CHRISTIANS

14. (C) Hariri said disagreements between March 14 Christian leaders -- Lebanese Forces (LF) head Samir Geagea and Kataeb leader Amine Gemayel -- were still causing the March 14 coalition problems. However, after he calms the situation with Jumblatt, Hariri declared he would solve the disputes between the Christians. "Don't worry," he told the Ambassador, "we will fix it." Geagea and Gemayel want a large proportion of March 14's seats, said Hariri, even if their candidates are not the best ones to compete against Christian opposition leader Michel Aoun's candidates. According to Hariri, Geagea "plays innocent" and blames Gemayel for the problems, but carries just as much of the blame. Hariri told the Ambassador and DCM he had met with Gemayel earlier on April 23 and would meet with Geagea soon.

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Interestingly, he mentioned that the April 10 meeting of March 14 leaders at Qoreitem (Ref D) was the first Gemayel and Geagea meeting since the Doha Accord sessions in May 2008, 11 months before.

15. (C) Regarding the withdrawal of Minister of State Nassib Lahoud from the race in the Metn (Ref C), Hariri said he tried to mediate between Lahoud, Metn Christian politico Michel Murr, and Gemayel. Nader Hariri added that Murr was flexible but Lahoud had made his decision and could not be convinced to run; Gemayel was also a "major obstacle." Hariri opined that Lahoud's withdrawal was linked to his concern that March 14 would lose the election in the Metn. A Lahoud loss would reduce the likelihood of his becoming a minister in the next cabinet, and limit his future chances of reaching the presidency.

POSITIVE MOMENTUM ON ELECTIONS

16. (C) Hariri expressed satisfaction with March 14's recent electoral events in West Bakaa, Akkar, Minnieh-Dinnieh, and Tripoli. He said March 14 will have to fight for one seat in Dinnieh and one or two in West Bekaa, but he expected his planned future visits to the area would work in March 14's favor. Nader Hariri said Future would hold an event in Sidon -- where Future candidates Minister of Education Bahia Hariri and Prime Minister Fouad Siniora have declared their candidacies -- closer to elections. March 14 was also planning an event to announce its list in Beirut, but not in the next week. In Zahle, March 14 independent-leaning candidate Nicholas Fattoush will announce the electoral list, because of his local Zahlaoui credentials, to minimize the optic of the Zahle list being a "Future list."

17. (C) As far as the other candidates on the Zahle list, Nader Hariri note that Gemayel is insisting on the candidacy of Tourism Minister Elie Marouni, a less popular Kataeb figure, over independent Paul Charbel. Gemayel's displeasure with taking an independent on the list could result in a third list in Zahle, which would take votes from March 14. In addition, Geagea's support of Armenian Lebanese Forces candidate Richard Kouyoumjian (an Amcit dentist resident in

Washington D.C. until one month ago) in Beirut 1 district has caused controversy. March 14 Armenian parties objected to his candidacy and have backed current MP Serge Tor Sarkissian as their preferred Armenian Catholic candidate in the district, which could again split the March 14 vote.

SPECIAL TRIBUNAL

18. (C) Hariri said he had phoned UAE FM Abdullah bin Zayed regarding the recent arrest in the UAE of former Syrian intelligence officer Mohammed Zohair al-Siddiq (Ref B), previously a witness for Lebanon's Special Tribunal (STL). Hariri reportedly told Sheikh Abdullah that the UAE could do what it liked with Siddiq, but any action should be taken after Lebanon's June 7 election. Similarly, Hariri argued that the four generals detained in relation to the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri should be released only after elections.

MOUAWAD: BIG PARTIES SIDELINING SMALLER PLAYERS

19. (C) March 14 stalwart Nayla Mouawad, a Maronite, told DCM on April 21 that a number of March 14 members lament the lack of expected Saudi funding to help March 14 with the election. She asked for U.S. help to get the Saudis to open up. She had praise for Hariri's public performance earlier in the week launching campaigns in the northern districts, and thought Jumblatt's apology to the Maronites and others that he issued that day was helpful (Note: Jumblatt met with Maronite Patriarch Sfeir on April 24. End note.) She expressed concern that in forming lists, March 14 leaders are

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focusing on protecting large parties at the expense of key players who are not associated with the main parties, including herself, Nassib Lahoud, who recently withdrew his candidacy, and Boutros Harb. The Patriarch is with March 14 "all the way", she said, and the Lebanese expatriates who will return to vote on June 7 are "80 percent March 14".

COMMENT

10. (C) Hariri was more upbeat than we have seen him recently, a good sign, especially following a difficult week for March 14. Aided strongly by his cousin Nader, he seems focused on finalizing lists so real campaigning can begin. His plan to spend time in Lebanon to make return visits to districts where he sees tough races is noteworthy, given that he has been criticized historically for being absent from the Lebanese political scene (and from Lebanon). His mediation will be crucial to solve disputes between his Christian allies, and his embrace of this role bodes well. Nevertheless, much work remains to be done for March 14 to succeed, and with 44 days remaining before elections, there is no time for delay. End summary.

SISON